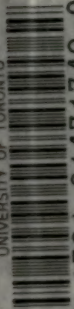


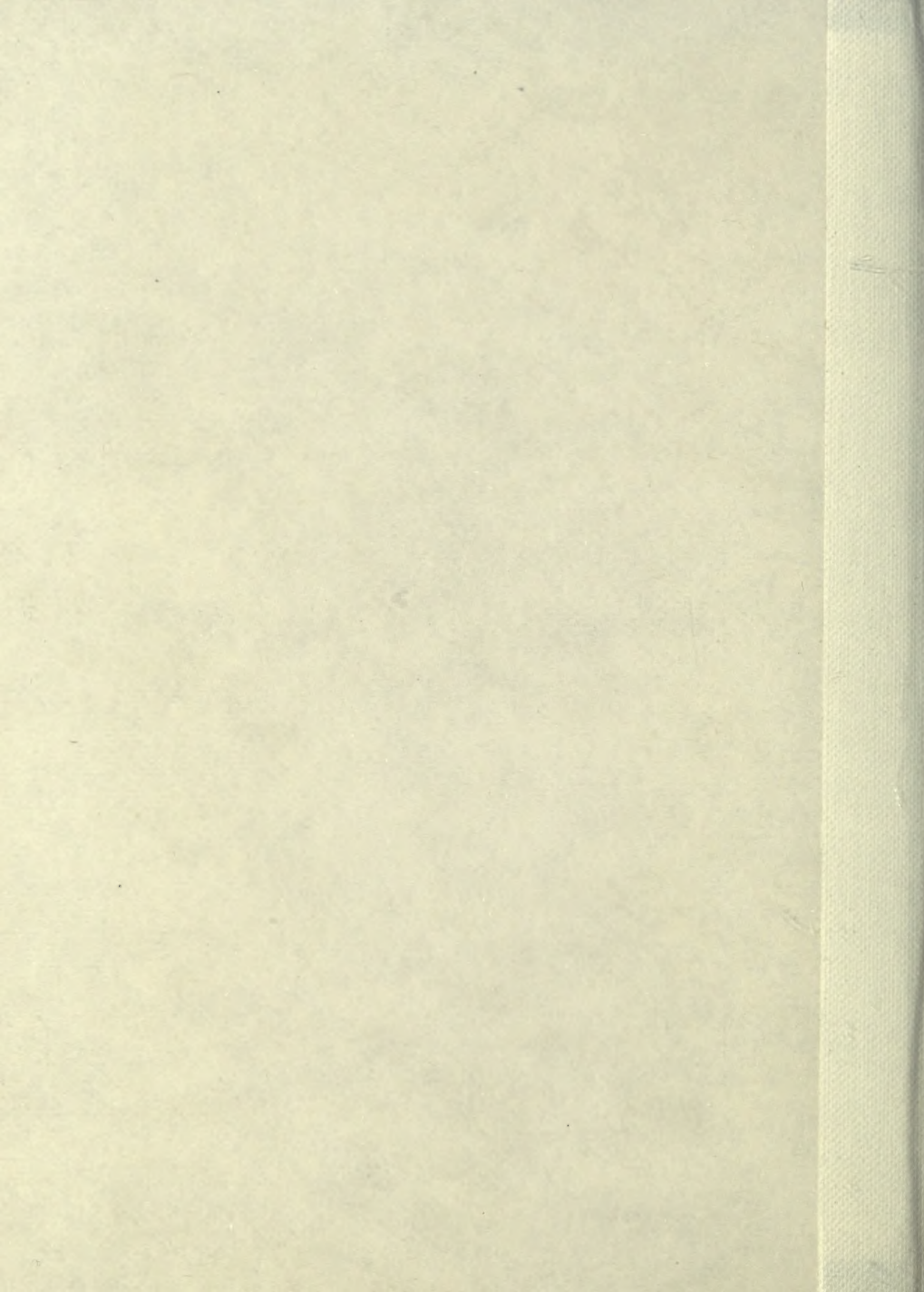
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In the Catharsis

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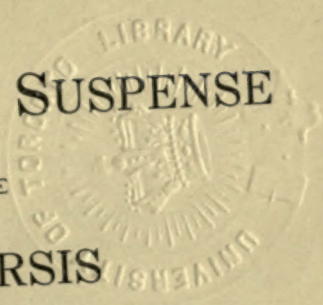
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THE  
FUNCTION OF SUSPENSE  
IN THE  
CATHARSIS



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## PREFACE.

In a more formal or more extended treatment of the function of suspense in the catharsis, one might reasonably expect that the critical history of the latter term should receive some preliminary consideration. So closely has it been associated with the name of Aristotle that almost the whole critical literature that has arisen around it has been largely devoted to proving what Aristotle understood the process to be to which he gave the name catharsis.

Two reasons lead me to believe, however, that the function of suspense in the catharsis can be made to stand out more clearly by refraining from any such preliminary discussion. The first of these is very evident. Not only are comparatively few of those interested in the drama desirous of tracing such critical disputations but to adopt one explicit theory as to what Aristotle regarded as the catharsis or explicitly to reject any or all would needlessly antagonize partisans of all but the accepted interpretation.

The other reason for omitting such a discussion will become apparent to the reader, for the point of departure is not the catharsis itself but the characteristics of suspense; and the sequence of argument is, first, the function of suspense in general, then the function of suspense in the drama, and finally the function of suspense in the catharsis. Because of this method and order of treatment the meaning given to the term catharsis arises from the investigation of the function of suspense in the tragic drama, and any attempt to

base the discussion on Aristotle or his interpreters would not only be confusing but could have no logical validity.

Moreover, whether or not the view of the catharsis finally advanced meets with any wide acceptance, the justification of this study of the function of suspense in the catharsis may well come from its calling attention to a much neglected field of critical inquiry and to the vantage point afforded by the study of suspense for attacking critical problems which might otherwise have to be treated either in a narrowly dogmatic or in a loosely generalizing fashion.

It might also seem that before we could discuss the function of suspense in the catharsis it would be necessary to establish rather definitely at the beginning of the discussion just what suspense is, even if we did not explicitly define the process to which we give the name catharsis. If this were true, however, there would be small hope of our satisfying such a requirement, for psychologists are as unable to agree upon just what suspense is as critics are as to what constitutes the catharsis.

Fortunately no such explicit definition of either term is necessary. Indeed so far as the catharsis is concerned we shall be able to consider in much more openness of mind just what this process is in which suspense is a functioning element if we do not commit ourselves as to what the catharsis is before we trace out the actual function of suspense in the tragic drama. As regards suspense, it is true, it will be necessary to take up a preliminary inquiry of some length, but not in an attempt to establish just what suspense is. In fact the only necessary preliminary for our critical consideration of this problem is to make evident those characteristics of suspense which persons interested in

such problems will be willing to accept as essentially true.

This method will not only arouse less opposition but will be more easily understood than any attempt to define suspense or even to force upon the reader certain characteristics by appeal to either authority or argument in psychology or biology. For on the one hand if anyone sees an essential of suspense that has been omitted, he is at liberty to follow out what its effects would be; and on the other hand if there happens to be something presented as a characteristic of suspense to which a recalcitrant reader objects, he may exclude it from his consideration without necessarily rejecting the main thesis advanced.

The general thesis was originally submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. In restating the problem for a more general reading, however, the whole historical statement has been omitted and the reason for the method of approach has been confined to the preface. Other parts of the original thesis have been omitted when they were designed primarily for formal proof rather than convincing exposition; and on the other hand when it could be done without digressing from the main theme an effort has been made to show the function of suspense in the drama as a whole and the advantage which the study of suspense offers as a starting point for criticism of the dynamic arts which lay stress on plot.

Ann Arbor, March 1, 1911.



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## PART I.

### SUSPENSE AS A UNIFYING POWER.

The characteristics of suspense which will probably gain readiest acceptance are those which we see in animals and which most of us can probably recollect as having experienced ourselves. For instance, as one dog, bent on hostilities but not making an immediate attack, approaches another there are certain characteristics of suspense which will be evident to most observers. Each dog seems to be gathering his powers for the conflict; and if the attack though imminent is somewhat delayed the uncertainty of the exact instant and method of attack will produce certain fairly evident results. There is an alertness and physical tension that are quite apparent to anyone, and as the imminence of the battle increases this alertness and physical tension are increased.

Most anyone, surely, will grant that these are characteristics of suspense. Nor is it much less probable that all that each dog has of intelligence as well as physical strength is united to make his attack or defense the most effective possible.

Another characteristic not quite so evident to the casual observer is the gathering of the animal's powers, the accumulation of a sort of reserve energy for instant expenditure. When surprised by almost instantly threatened attack a dog may have marked physical tenseness but he does not give the impression of having

surplus energy demanding instant expenditure which as the suspense increases makes the spectator who dares be interested in such things say, "Watch 'em. They can't keep apart another second."

Those who have not noticed this characteristic of suspense in animals may have experienced it themselves. The athlete who has heard, "On your marks," "Set," feels the energy gathered under the suspense of the all important start demanding an outlet, and if the pistol shot be too long delayed it becomes an effort to restrain himself.

In like fashion anyone who has waited for the opportunity to speak may have experienced this accumulation of energy. His chance seems to be approaching, for the person who has the floor is almost through. In fancy the would-be speaker sees himself rising and addressing the chair, and rising quickly, too, lest some one else secure recognition. In fancy he sees just how he will begin. The person who has the floor has said "lastly" and "finally" and "in conclusion" and "just one word more," and at each phrase that has promised an end the would-be speaker has felt an increased fullness of speech demanding utterance. He feels he simply must talk, and talk soon.

To many, however, this accumulation of energy through suspense is more apparent when the cause of suspense is removed. They see it in the exultant rush of the sprinter who has learned to use skilfully the suspense of the start and feels in the first few yards that he has more energy than he can use. In the early moments of the speech of one who has waited in suspense for his opportunity they see it in his tendency to let his speech run away with him. And, returning to the physical side, no one who has stood in the close packed scrimmage line waiting for the slightly delayed



snapping back of the ball is likely to forget the electric like shock with which the line sprang into action.

There is a fifth characteristic way in which suspense manifests itself. For lack of a better term we may call it alternation. Thus when one dog awaits the attack of another it is the feeling that the attack is to be made this way or that, now or not just now, and the consequent uncertainty, that heightens the suspense by making him feel that now one, now another is the correct solution. As the crouching sprinter hears "On your marks," "Set," there is a double alternation that keys him up to the highest point of efficiency. On the one hand the alternation is between his feeling that the shot he is waiting for must be sounding even now and his feeling that he must wait till he actually hears it. On the other hand there is the alternation in imagination between the activity of the race, which he is in fancy already running, and the enforced waiting of the start.

These characteristics of suspense will be seen also as we trace the development and function of suspense in the drama, but the average reader will be much more inclined to give them full credence if he has first seen that they are not confined to the suspense of art but are fundamentally the same in the suspense of everyday life. For instance, he can readily see how in a tragedy all of these characteristics seem to unite in producing a unification of the spectator's powers for the solution of the tragic problem. His confidence in this unification as a fundamental characteristic of suspense will, however, be greatly increased if he has had his attention called to the very evident fact that even in the lower animal suspense unifies all its powers to meet a given situation in the most effective way possible.

That this is true also of man in general as well as

the lower animals can be readily seen in the savage. In the "Last of the Mohicans"<sup>1</sup> Cooper describes for us the effect of suspense on the savage, an effect that most people will feel instinctively is true to life.

"The head of Chingachgook was resting on a hand as he sat musting by himself." At this point Hawkeye gives the signal of warning, and though the Indian made no change in his general posture the effect of the suspense of the situation is described as follows: "While to a less instructed eye the Mohican chief appeared to slumber, his nostrils were expanded, his head was turned a little to one side as if to assist the organs of hearing, and his quick and rapid glances ran incessantly over every object within the power of his vision."

The same book<sup>2</sup> contains an excellent illustration of how the suspense of hope as well as the suspense of fear unifies all the powers a man possesses. Believing that Hawkeye, who was disguised as a bear, was the conjurer of his enemies, "Uncas had cast his body back against the wall as if willing to exclude such contemptible and disagreeable objects from his sight. But the moment the hiss of the serpent<sup>3</sup> was heard, he arose and cast his looks on each side of him, bending his head low and turning it enquiringly in every direction until his keen eye rested on the shaggy monster, where it remained riveted as though fixed by the powers of a charm."

In both these cases we see pretty clearly the outward signs of three of these characteristics of suspense which we have mentioned, physical tension, alertness, and the

<sup>1</sup> Chapter XIX.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter XXIV.

<sup>3</sup> The hiss of a serpent was a signal frequently used by Uncas, Chingachgook and Hawkeye.

unification of all the man's powers in the presence of his problem. These, in fact, seem to be the characteristics which are evident to the ordinary observer of the physical appearance produced by suspense either in man or in one of the lower animals.

In neither of the cases taken from Cooper, it is true, do we find the suspense ended in such a way as to show unmistakably the accumulation of energy, though the abruptness of Uncas, as soon as released, in choosing to run for it without thinking that such a course would sacrifice Hawkeye may be so interpreted. The alternation is very evident upon a closer reading, however, especially in the first illustration. "His quick and rapid glances ran incessantly over every object in the power of his vision," signifies more than mere alertness. Every object in his range of vision, indistinct in the darkness, is the object of possible danger; and far from being merely alert to receive impressions, the chief throws all his powers into sweeping over each object again and again as if, in spite of his inability to see danger in it before, it still might hide or even be the enemy.

These, then, are five fundamental characteristics of suspense which I believe that almost everyone interested in dramatic criticism will be willing to accept: physical tension, alertness, alternation, the accumulation of reserve energy, and, in proportion as the suspense is effective, the unification of all the powers of the organism. Moreover, these constitute a sufficient basis for investigating the function of suspense in the catharsis of the tragic drama.

It will, however, be somewhat easier for the reader not only to understand but to give full credit to the function of suspense in the drama as well as in the catharsis if he understands more fully the biological

reasons which make it possible for suspense in the tragic drama to achieve the unification of all the powers of the spectator. In other words he can more readily understand how this characteristic fulfills its function if he can see how it is biologically possible for the intellect, the emotions, and the will to be brought into a vital as well as an effective unification.

It is true that everyone will readily concede that in tragedy the appeal is to the sensuous emotions. They will agree also that the spectator is in an essentially emotional state of mind. But if we are to find in the effects of the tragic drama any validity derived from the intellectual or volitional elements we must see how these elements become a vital part of the unification instead of merely letting their functions lapse so as to give the emotional element in the spectator full sway. For in spite of all that recent psychology has done to break down the old clear cut division of our faculties into emotions, intellect, and will, there is still a feeling among many that these elements are so essentially distinct in their nature that not even any phase of one of them could be transformed into the aspect of another.

Everyone who believes in evolution in any thoroughgoing fashion, however, will find there a rational basis for the possibility of such a unification becoming vital. Many people, it is true, believe in evolution only in a general way or restrict their practical application of the term to the proof by comparative anatomy that all highly evolved species of the present day had a similar origin. When the thoroughgoing evolutionist approaches any problem dealing with beginnings, however, he will not insist that he be granted a primal organism to start with in which intellect or emotions or will is already existent.

As we need consider evolution here only so far as it throws light upon one phase of our special problem we are not of course concerned as to where the primal organism comes from. All we need to do is to insist that the theory of evolution which is put forward to satisfy us should not have as a starting point an organism with emotions or intellect or will already evolved or granted to start with. We must be thoroughgoing enough in our conception of evolution to begin at the point where the primal organism had not only no emotions or intellect or will but nothing in its nature which made it respond in any particular way to its environment. We can not, therefore, like Schopenhauer insist on the will as already established, or with Lamarck assume the intellect as preexistent to account for instinct.

As soon as we commit ourselves to an evolution as thoroughgoing as this, then some such explanation as the following is necessary before we can see how evolution took place. Granted primal organisms which had nothing in their nature which made them respond in any particular way to their environment, it must follow that those organisms perished which just did not happen to act in a way that made for survival and that those organisms survived which did just happen to act in a way that made for survival. As a result there developed in the course of time through the laws of heredity a tendency to act in certain ways under certain conditions. This was more like reflex than anything else we can readily conceive of as existing in such an organism, though of course there was nothing corresponding to the nerve center which we ordinarily think of as necessary to a reflex. In the earlier stages of this evolution, purely because of inherited tendencies, when the organism protoplasm came in contact

with anything it "shrank" from what was harmful and "reached out" for its food.

In course of time such reflexes unified the organism in a more vital fashion, and it began as a whole to assume an attitude towards whatever came into its environment. In case of danger, what corresponded to fear arose as an attitude of the organism as a whole. So also in case the new object promised possibility of food where was a corresponding reaction throughout the organism. Very evidently, then, though there was no explicit central selfconsciousness to recognize them as such, even at this early stage in the evolutionary process the most fundamental of the emotions had evolved.

As soon as the organism had passed the mere reflex stage, moreover, before it could adopt its final emotional attitude in any given case it was necessary that it should feel assured of the nature of the new object. Here again survival or destruction was determined not only by how the organism reacted but by whether it reacted soon enough. And it was probably at about this stage that suspense developed in the evolving organism by the mere hereditary survival of chance processes that made for self-preservation.

Upon the advent of a strange object into its environment the organism assumed the attitude of suspense. This achieved two things, both necessary to its surer survival. In the first place it so unified the organism in the presence of its problem as to enable it to determine at the earliest possible moment how to act. In the second place it summoned all the powers of the organism into such a readiness that when the time came for it the action was the most effective possible.

For the mere survival of the primary organism, we have considered about all that was necessary. When

it became aware of a strange object in its environment, the fact that it might be dangerous forced the organism to adopt the attitude of suspense. After assuring itself that the strange object was dangerous or that it was neutral or that it was suitable for food, the organism adopted the fitting emotional attitude toward it, did the thing the occasion called for, and survived.

In the course of evolution other characteristics evolved which were necessary to a readier adjustment of the organism to its environment or which made this adjustment possible with a smaller expenditure of energy. Thus the law of economy demanded that problems that could be attended to by the organism in part should not receive the attention of the organism as a whole; and local reflex and, in course of time, a something akin to explicit sensation developed.

During all this time, however, whenever danger was imminent it was necessary that the organism act as a whole; and at such times the evident function of suspense would be to reunite all its phases and summon all its powers. This was still more evidently true when the central self-consciousness had finally evolved and began explicitly to interpret the increasingly definite sensations, and it remained true even when the determinative faculty had evolved which we know as the will.

This consideration of the general course of evolution should help us to realize more fully that the intellect and the emotions and the will are not clearly marked and entirely isolated divisions of the psychos.<sup>4</sup> Of

<sup>4</sup>In order to express unmistakably certain ideas without resorting to phrases which become more or less awkward by too frequent repetition, the words psychos and psychoerasis will be used in a specific sense. The word psychos will be used to indicate the psychic complex as a whole, emotions, intellect, will, and all other elements that taken together con-

course we know both by introspection and observation that intellectual elements are as a rule very evident in the emotions and that emotional elements enter very largely into the processes of intellect. We do not ordinarily realize, however, how intimate this connection is; nor do we ordinarily take into consideration the biological basis which makes it possible for these at times seemingly wholly distinct phases so to unite as to form a perfect psychocrasis.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility of this psychocrasis is assured us by the fact that intellect and emotions and will have all evolved from a common basis. It is still further assured us by the fact that throughout the upward course of evolution at various times in the life of each individual organism there have undoubtedly been occasions when the stress of special circumstances forced all the phases of the organism into a unification to meet a threatening problem. It is thus seen not only that the needs of ordinary experience effect a partial unification of even such seemingly distinct phases of the psychos as intellect emotions and will but that these phases have evolved from a common basis, that throughout the process of evolution they have under certain conditions been reunited, and that therefore if the proper conditions can be supplied they may be brought into a perfect reunification.

stitute man's psychic nature. The sense in which psychocrasis will be used can be most readily understood from its constituent parts. "Crisis" is already in use to indicate a union of two elements under one aspect. "Psycho-" in compounds refers to the psychos. The word psychocrasis therefore comes naturally to mean a union of different phases of the psychos under one aspect. The specific meaning with which it will be used here is "the unification of the different phases of the psychos which takes place under the aspect of the sensuous emotions when the spectator comes under the influence of art."



## PART II.

### THE FUNCTION OF SUSPENSE IN THE TRAGEDY.

Having seen that it is the function of suspense to unify the individual in the presence of his problem and that there is furnished us by evolution the assurance that there is a biological basis for a vital unification of the emotions and intellect and will, we are now in a position to deal directly with our special problem. For the sake of clearness, it will first be shown how the suspense of tragedy makes possible a not only complete but highly effective psychocrasis, and in the second place how because of the very nature of this psychocrasis achieved through art it makes possible the tragic catharsis.

In the best tragedies, from the very beginning the tragic atmosphere arouses within the spectator a feeling of something impending, not only before the intellect has been given sufficient data to begin its effort toward solution but even before the inciting moment<sup>5</sup> has foreshadowed the problem to be solved. In *Macbeth*<sup>6</sup> we are well into the third scene before even one wholly familiar with the play can point to a word which

<sup>5</sup>This term is used throughout in a technical sense to indicate the point in the development of the drama where it first becomes evident what forces are to clash.

<sup>6</sup>While drawing also from other tragedies for illustration, especial use will be made of *Macbeth* because as the one drama specifically demanded for college entrance it is probably the one most thoroughly familiar to all who are interested in this problem.

foreshadows what is to be the tragic theme. And yet the first scene with its witches has keyed us up to expect that in some way they will interfere in the affairs of men, though we do not know how. The second scene has furnished us with necessary material and exalted the character of Macbeth till it has excited our interest and admiration; and it has also furnished before the second appearance of the witches the lapse of time necessary to let the feeling of the supernatural grow.

This feeling of something impending, even though it is of higher type, is essentially the same as that "feeling" of something impending which in the primal organism sent out the call for unification. As the introduction<sup>7</sup> advances, our feeling demands more and more to know what is impending; and even as of old under the influence of suspense the primal organism unified its powers in the presence of its problem, so we too come to the inciting moment with our powers alert to see and solve the mystery.

Already as one thing after another has been introduced into this tragic atmosphere and we feel that the introduction must furnish at least a basis for seeing what the problem is, we can distinguish every one of those fundamentals which we have noted as characteristics of suspense. As because of the essentially emotional attitude of the spectator whatever psychocrisis is effected in the tragedy must take place under the aspect of the emotions, the function of this earlier suspense is to begin the unification on the emotional side and by awakening the sensuous emotions to increase the alertness into more than merely sensuous receptivity.

<sup>7</sup> Used throughout in its technical sense to refer to that part of the drama which precedes the inciting moment.

But the suspense must not be too far heightened in the introduction, for after the psychocrasis has been begun on the emotional side the business of the drama is not to raise the emotional intensity to the highest pitch as soon as possible but by a more gradual unification of the emotions and intellect and will to secure a psychocrasis at once deeper and more representative of the whole than anything experience affords. If the emotions of the spectator are too far heightened in the very beginning, the more perfect unification of all phases of the psychos is apt not to be achieved and the tragedy then becomes more of a merely emotional experience. This is the flaw in the drama which plunges too suddenly into its theme and unduly intensifies it too early in the play. Webster's greatest plays suffer from this, Marlowe's *Tambourlane* loses from its violent beginning, and Shakespeare's *Richard Third* has probably had its vogue because it is essentially a melodrama. The fact that the villain is allowed to kill the innocent and that Richmond is not made prominent enough for a hero keeps it from being a melodrama of the baldest type, but as an acting play its success depends essentially upon the melodramatic flux of emotions.

Beginning with the inciting moment, therefore, elements must be added to the play that call for more and more of the intelligence of the spectator to solve the problem. Up to the murder of Duncan we have the physical courage of Macbeth when opposed to armed men, his moral weakness, the resoluteness of Lady Macbeth, and the ambition of both. How will they react on each other? What will be the immediate result? What the result in the end?

Yet it is the dramatist's business on the one hand to see that not enough data are furnished to give the intellect any chance of solving the problem as mere intel-

lect, and on the other hand so to heighten the emotional demand for solution that more and more of the energy of the spectator is drawn into the unification. In Macbeth, therefore, we have thrust upon us more problems than we could solve in the time given us even if we had a more adequate basis for solution. Macbeth, honored by the king and people, shamed into deeper loyalty to his king, proud of his unspotted honor with the people, does not wish to go on. Opposed to this is the woman's shaming of his courage when it is not a question of courage. Opposed to both stands Banquo, Banquo who knows of Macbeth's temptation and who is thrust before the audience sword in hand just before the murder to force us to remember this and question how he will act. Then there is the dagger which Macbeth sees in fancy and which warns us that there is to be an inner conflict as well as an outer.

What will be the result of all these conflicting elements? It is beyond our power to solve the problem or even attempt specific solution in the time given us as the drama hurries on introducing new complications.

As a result, the intelligence seeking a solution for which both the data and the time given are hopelessly insufficient is forced into an attitude of mere eager outreaching closely akin to alert sensuous receptivity and speedily becomes essentially emotional in character. In fact throughout the entanglement it is the evident business of the mystery to make it impossible for the intellect as mere intellect to make progress toward any solution. Likewise it is the evident business of suspense to call insistently for a solution. Thus the energy of the spectator which ordinarily displays itself as intellect will be forced, to give up seeking for a solution by the methods of intellect and to unite with the emotional unification which is already well under way.

In like manner it is the business of the entanglement to draw into the unification that phase of the psychos which we know under the general term of will. We usually think of the function of the will as confined to determining and carrying into effect a personal solution. Now, however, it finds itself in a realm of sensuous emotions with insufficient data for any immediate solution whatever, and with no specific solution even offered for its decision. More than this, whenever the data given seem to point to any solution conflicting data are hurried in to keep the spectator from feeling that he can solve the problem. After Macbeth has returned from murdering Duncan and we feel that all has gone as it has been planned, the second adverse fancy of Macbeth, the voice that cried "sleep no more," keeps us from feeling that with almost everything on their side the finally resolute murderers will have everything their own way. Macbeth has also brought the daggers with him, he thinks he hears noises, he dares not return to place the daggers by the grooms; and while Lady Macbeth goes resolutely to replace them and "gild the faces of the grooms" we hear the "knocking within."

Even when, after the delay of the porter's scene, Macduff and Lennox enter, the spectator finds that their discovery that the king has been murdered is kept from bringing direct results by the flight of his sons. Yet lest we feel too secure for Macbeth, even before the open declaration of Banquo at the beginning of Act III, we are shown that suspicion is abroad. So too in the disentanglement when we are in a way fairly sure that Macbeth must fall, we are kept from a too great confidence in any solution by the prophecy that three things must happen before harm can come to him, things that seem impossible of fulfillment.

Accordingly as more and more energy is drawn into the growing psychocrasis the will fails utterly to find a basis for any decision or choice. It is therefore impossible for it to make any merely individual reaction on what is presented and solve it by deciding in favor of some particular solution. Just because it is impossible for it to find vent for its energy in its more narrow aspect of choice, moreover, the will in its more general nature of effort joins all the more unreservedly in the unification.

This whole process of unification may be summed up in some such fashion as this: We have seen from their biological evolution that a psychocrasis of the emotions, the intellect, and the will may take place if conditions are given which will call insistently upon the different phases of the psychos to unite to meet some special problem more effectively. It is evident, moreover, that the more evenly and insistently these conditions call upon the different phases of the psychos, and the more these conditions themselves tend to bring the different phases into harmony the more perfect and comprehensive the psychocrasis will be. We have seen that a distinctive function of suspense is the unifying of all the powers of the organism. More than this, we have seen how by beginning on the emotional side and gradually increasing the suspense, the great tragedy summons into the psychocrasis more and more of both intellect and will. Thus in a more effective way than chance makes possible in experience it reunites the emotions and intellect and will, and so gains for the impress of the universal in the tragic drama a validity to which mere experience can never attain.

We have here also the reason for the assertion that the revelations of art, especially in the tragic drama, are more universal than the pronouncements of philo-

sophy. Philosophy, it is often said—and it is too often true—attempts to reach the universal essentially by the isolated intellect. Art, however, achieves its end not by the sensuous emotions merely, as is too often taken for granted, but by the reunification through the sensuous emotions of all the phases of our being. The philosopher as such makes merely intellectual pronouncements, but art attains for itself a validity which is not only broader, because it has the sanction of all the phases of our being instead of that of merely one, but which is also deeper as it has for a basis and a guarantee of its validity the whole process of evolution which has made us what we are.

For it is evident that the more perfect the psychocrasis the more it includes of the vital elements in the emotions and intellect and will. That these vital elements, moreover, have an authority outside of the organism in which they are found, is due to the laws of evolution. For evolution took place just in proportion as whatever was most vital in the evolving organism adapted itself to its ever varying environment. If, therefore, there is any universal which underlies or enforms everything, if there is anything which unifies the world in which we have evolved, the one condition which was absolutely essential to our evolution was that whatever was most vital in us should become in harmony with that universal which enformed, and which still enforms, our infinitely varying environment.

The fact that we have evolved thus becomes an assurance that what is most vital in all three phases of our nature is in harmony with the universal, whatever it is, which enforms our environment. The problem of art, therefore, is to unite all that is most vital in our emotions and intellect and will in order that the im-

press of art may have as the basis and guarantee of its validity the whole evolutionary process.

In greater or in less fashion all art makes its impress upon these vital elements, but it will be shown that the tragic drama possesses two characteristics which make its impress the most valid of all forms of art. For the more perfect the psychocrasis the more there will enter into it those vital elements whose harmony with the universal in its infinitely varying environment made it possible for the organism to evolve. And the more all the vital elements of the spectator's psychos are brought into an effective reunification the more valid will be the impress which it receives.

On the one hand we shall see that through the suspense of the tragic drama a more perfect reunification can be effected of the vital elements in emotions and intellect and will than can be achieved in any other way even in art. On the other hand we shall see how this reunified whole is left free to act most effectively. For it will be shown that by repeated demands for energy on behalf of these vital elements, the elements less vital in all the phases of our being are deprived of the energy necessary to their continuous existence and are thus purged away. If, therefore, in the psychocrasis effected by the tragedy we do not have a unified being in perfect harmony with the universal underlying alike the spectator and his environment, we at least have the nearest approach to it of which the human being is capable.

We are now in a position to set forth more explicitly the function of suspense in a tragedy and its part in effecting the entire process which constitutes the real catharsis. For the sake of clearness, even at the risk of seemingly covering the same ground more than once,



the function of suspense in the entanglement,<sup>8</sup> disentanglement, and denouement will be traced, and then three corresponding phases of the catharsis. The grounds for maintaining that these effects are produced by suspense will then be more specifically established by showing not only how physical tension, alertness, alternation, unification, and the accumulation of energy have each their evident function in the suspense of tragedy, but how through their combined effectiveness the deeper catharsis of tragedy is possible. And finally, the nature and scope of the catharsis which the suspense of tragedy makes possible is made still more evident by establishing the grounds upon which all claims to permanent effects of the catharsis must rest.

The most evident function of suspense preceding and during the entanglement is to create a psychocrasis the most comprehensive possible at this stage of plot development. During this process, as we have seen, a very real catharsis is effected. All that is so merely peculiar to some narrowly individualistic phase of emotions or intellect or will that it can not harmonize itself with the reunified whole has been deprived of its energy by the insistent demands of suspense and has thus been purged away.

The psychocrasis is made possible by the fact that the emotions and intellect and will evolved from a common psychophysical basis. Its validity depends upon the fact that all three phases evolved just in proportion as

<sup>8</sup> Like "inciting moment" and "introduction" these terms are used throughout with a definite technical sense. The entanglement extends from the inciting moment to the climax, the disentanglement from the climax to the final lysis (the last revelation needed to make the solution which the dramatist gives unreservedly necessary and evident), and the denouement extends from this to the end of the play.

their most fundamental elements achieved and maintained an essential harmony with the enforming universal in their infinitely varying environment. In proportion as the psychocrasis approaches perfection, therefore, these most fundamental elements in the different phases of the psychos reunite.

We must not, however, in any way assume that these primary fundamental elements in the emotions and intellect and will are all that enter the psychocrasis. It is true that a vital reunification becomes possible because these fundamental elements having evolved from a common psychophysical basis not only have the inherent possibility of reuniting but have in more or less perfect fashion been reunified as occasion demanded throughout the evolutionary process. It is true that the validity of the psychocrasis depends upon the fact that these fundamentals when reunified do by the very fact that a perfect psychocrasis is possible give a sanction to each other as genuine and in harmony with the universal in their environment through harmony with which they evolved. But the elements which enter into the psychocrasis effected by the tragic drama are far more varied and inclusive than the mere fundamental elements of certain phases of the psychos. For every element in the psychic complex of the spectator which is sufficiently in harmony with these fundamentals to make such a union possible is literally forced by the insistent compelling suspense of the tragedy to unite with the growing psychocrasis.

The function of these fundamentals is thus seen to be twofold. In the first place besides contributing certain elements toward it they create the possibility of the psychocrasis taking place and insure its validity. In the second place they are a test as to whether other elements in the psychos are universal in character or

merely individual. Whatever of any element in the psychos can unite with these fundamentals in the formation of a perfect psychocrasis is shown thereby to be universal in its nature by the mere fact of its harmony with them being so perfect as to make such a union possible. On the other hand if anything in the psychos is so merely individual that it is not essentially in harmony with these fundamentals it can not unite with the growing psychocrasis.

As a result, every element in the psychos that is in harmony with these fundamentals and therefore all that is richest and truest in the individual experience is drawn into the psychocrasis even where the genius of the individual may far transcend the development of the ordinary spectator. Every element in his being which could make the unification richer and fuller is drawn into it by the compelling power of suspense and the means used to achieve it. On the other hand, because suspense calls so insistently for all the available energy of the psychos to solve the problem any elements which are not in harmony with these fundamentals are deprived of the energy necessary to their continuous existence and are thus purged away.

This is the great fundamental characteristic of the catharsis wherever it occurs in art. The merely individual in the psychos is purged away that all that is most universal in the spectator may unite unhindered in the presence of the universal revealed through art. It makes no difference whether the merely individual elements are in one case especially the overdeveloped emotional peculiarities of the esthete, in another the arrogance of the will in its narrowly individual character, or in another the rigidly schematising faculty in the intellect of a philosopher. Whatever the merely individual elements are it is the function of the catharsis

to purge them away that the universal elements may unite unhindered by their presence. In the tragic drama, therefore, the catharsis is not to be thought of as having to do only with the denouement; for this catharsis of the individual is essential in the entanglement since an important function of the entanglement is to effect a psychocrasis of the spectator.

This unification of all the elements in the psychos of the spectator is more vital than that attained in the contemplation of the static arts, such as sculpture and painting, because through the tragic drama the dynamic character of the will as effort is more fully included in the unification. The esthetic experience of the spectator of the tragedy is not one of passivity, or even merely subjective activity, but of a compelled activity. The vitally unified psychos as an undivided whole reacts vitally upon everything presented to it and makes it its own for use on the problem in hand. It is only in the denouement that we find that passivity which all too many estheticians insist is always throughout the essential of esthetic experience. It is because of the compelled activity that precedes it, moreover, that even there the passivity of the esthetic experience has its peculiar validity.

On the other hand the unification achieved in tragedy is more vital than that attained in the other dynamic arts. It is more vital than that attained by music or grand opera because more of the intellect is drawn into the psychocrasis. It is more vital than that brought about by the epic or lyric because not only by its structural character but by its use of both sight and sound it has a fuller appeal than either.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Tragedy and the other forms of the drama are compared in this respect in the last chapter.

Through suspense and the means used to produce it, this psychocrasis achieved during the entanglement is always in a great tragedy exalted to the highest plane possible. This is the real ground of Aristotle's insistence that the tragic hero must be both high in rank and essentially good in character, and that an essential of a great tragedy is the ennobling of its characters and painting men better than they are. Suspense as to the fate of such men will more readily lift us up from the plane of everyday particularities to a plane of feeling where we are fitted to receive the impress of the universal.

This is also the basis of the claim that great art, and certainly great tragedy, must be idealistic rather than realistic. The ideal becomes not only a means of universalizing in a positive way but it tends to make the spectator lose sight of whatever is merely individualistic in his attitude to life, and to thus become more fully in harmony with the universal underlying the work of art.

As a third requisite of the entanglement, to this psychocrasis urged on by suspense to seek the solution of the tragic problem there must be furnished in sensuous form in harmony with its character the basis for that solution, though the explicit solution can scarcely be said to begin before the climax. As far as the mere furnishing of the basis of solution is concerned, it is generally understood that the beginning must furnish a causal basis for the outcome in all the forms of literature involving plot as a conflict of forces. But in the drama the necessity of furnishing this basis gives legitimate opportunity for the "embellishments of language," the free play of the imagination, and the heightening of the esthetic experience as a whole. And all of these tend to make more perfect the catharsis, the purging

away, of the merely individualistic so that the universal may make a more perfect impress upon the spectator thus prepared to receive it.

Accordingly after the entanglement has achieved these results the most evident function of the disentanglement is to bring into harmonious unity this psychocrasis of the spectator and the problem of the tragedy. In this process the function of suspense first shows itself through the reserve energy which has been steadily increasing as the suspense has been heightened until it now demands an outlet. For the revelation of the climax makes it possible for the achieved psychocrasis to feel a confidence in one general solution, and to move toward it as a sensuously unified whole; and this not only furnishes the reserve energy the outlet which it demands but because of the free expenditure of that pent up energy the spectator feels a pleasurable activity instead of mere relief from the strain when the revelation at the climax makes a solution possible.

More important still, the free expenditure of this energy also serves to preserve the artistic balance between the spectator and the tragic problem. The solution is generally revealed to him in the artist's own good time, when he has been prepared for the revelation, and the outrushing expenditure of this energy makes him so wholly at one with each successive revelation that the spectator and the problem are kept in artistic balance. Neither becomes subordinate and it is essential that neither should do so, as the great function of the disentanglement is to bring about a unification of the spectator and the tragic problem without subordinating either. For only under such conditions can the universal in the spectator and the universal in the tragedy become at one with each other.

There are evident reasons why the revelation must

not be complete at the climax. The mere law of economy would forbid that so perfect and intense a unification of any organism should be followed by a sudden and complete cessation of tension, since even in ordinary experience we know that the sudden ending of great suspense often brings collapse. Moreover, the universal element in the problem, though it is not fully revealed until in the denouement, begins to make itself more and more evident throughout the disentanglement. Then, too, the fuller revelation not only of the universal but even of the problem must be gradual and extend over some time just because the unification of spectator and problem is to take place in the realm of sensuous emotion where the psychocrasis, so to speak, "feels" its way to the solution rather than reasons it out in clearly marked stages. Finally, if this newer unification is to have its deepest validity the psychocrasis and the tragic problem must remain together on the same plane, and that too for some time, in order that the unification may be more perfect. And as a matter of act we know that in the best tragedies the disentanglement is a succession of partial revelations and sometimes of new perplexities, as in the assurances of the apparitions in *Macbeth*, almost as it were that more revelations might be made.

The function of suspense in this period known as the disentanglement is threefold. It must keep the being alert and outreaching for each successive revelation. Either through the old suspense producing elements of the entanglement or through new ones it must keep up a reserve of that energy which finds pleasurable outlet at each successive revelation. And, finally, in spite of the constantly increasing unification of the spectator and his problem it must still keep up until the denouement a complete psychocrasis. For as it feels the solution

more and more certain the psychos of the spectator has a tendency to sink back gradually into its normal differentiated phases; and this it must not be allowed to do before the final impress in the denouement.

Though throughout the disentanglement the psychocrisis is maintained and even further perfected, the transition from the intensity of the climax to the relaxation which succeeds the denouement is made possible on the one hand by the increasing unification of the spectator with the tragic problem and on the other by the constant expenditure of the reserve energy in this pleasurable unification. This expenditure not only makes more effective the sensuous outreaching of the spectator for a perfect solution but, when the last needed revelation has come and with the cessation of suspense the last of the gathered energy rushes unrestrictedly forth to make the unification complete, it also creates the possibility of that calm in which the spectator and the problem of the tragedy are no longer in the process of becoming one, but are one.

It is this period of calm in the denouement that the supreme as well as final art impress is received. In a measure during the entanglement, and much more so throughout the disentanglement, the spectator is made to feel that the problem is not merely specific but more and more universal. But the specific problem has been so insistent that though he feels the underlying universal more and more keenly his special interest has been to find a specific solution. Now that the spectator and this problem are at one, however, the deeper meaning, the underlying universal, becomes more and more prominent; and the unified yet hitherto still essentially finite whole assumes a universal character.

It is certainly due to suspense, moreover, that this period of calm is lengthened and that as its deeper



meaning becomes more and more prominent the universal aspect of the problem is realized by the undivided consciousness of a passive whole instead of by an active unification insisting to the end on a specific solution. For on the one hand suspense has kept the psychocrasis complete, has kept it purged from the merely individualistic even when for the needs of the immediate solution a constantly decreasing degree of unification would have sufficed, and on the other hand it has so drawn on the energy which would ordinarily supply the various differentiations that as soon as the suspense stimulus to activity ceases the energy producing cells, having overworked in their effort to supply the demands made on them, cease to act. Until they in a measure regain their normal initiative, therefore, and furnish energy for the differentiation to set in, the psychocrasis remains perfect and for the same reason passive.

Though many devices have been used to lengthen it, this period even at the best is not long. Its beginning makes more effective the sensuous outreaching of the is marked quite clearly by the final lysis<sup>10</sup> of the plot, the beginning of its end by the deep inhalation so familiar to theatergoers. Whatever follows this final lysis must be justified on the ground that it tends either to prolong this period or to make it more effective. In Hamlet, for instance, the introduction of Fortinbras and his soldiers must be justified in some such fashion.

<sup>10</sup> The final lysis (see footnote p. 27) is the last revelation needed to make the solution which the dramatist gives unreservedly necessary. To speak more technically it is the revelation which marks the transition from disentanglement to denouement by solving the difficulty which creates the moment of last suspense. In Macbeth the moment of last suspense is "I bear a charmed life which must not yield to one of woman born," the final lysis is Macduff's answer.

We may say it prolongs the period of effectiveness in the denouement. We may say it adds to the effectiveness of the drama by making a transition to our normal selves more easy. Unless some such justification can be made apparent, however, we must characterize everything that follows,

“And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

“To tell my story.”

as an artistic blemish, a something added for mere stage effect or like the last explanatory chapter of a novel intended to satisfy possible curiosity as to details.

The brevity of this period of calm, however, is in no sense a measure of its importance. Short though it be it is long enough for the spectator to realize fully that the underlying universal is the essential of the tragedy. Before the denouement the growing unification of the spectator with the tragic problem is still kept very largely in the realm of the finite by the definite requirements of the specific problem. Now that the specific problem has been solved, however, and it is no longer necessary to give heed to its merely finite aspects, the universal in the tragedy becomes fully revealed. That the tragedy may have its perfect effect it is essential that this universal and the psychocrasis of the spectator should enter harmoniously into a perfect unification; and, that this unification may take place, whatever is still finite in the psychocrasis or in its conception of the problem of the tragedy must be purged away. With this last purging away of the finite that this final unification may be perfect the cathartic process is complete.

In distinguishing three phases of the catharsis it is not intended to lay stress upon them as distinct never varying phases of a never varying process. It certainly

is not intended to insist that these three phases are always evident or even always present in every worthy spectator of every great tragedy. The purpose, on the one hand, is to give a more adequate presentation of the extent of the process when it exhibits itself in its fulness, and on the other hand it is to lay stress upon the fact that the catharsis is systemic and not merely specific.

Even in medicine where the reaction of specific drugs has been studied with scientific precision it is impossible to secure a wholly specific catharsis. It is always systemic in effects even when the direct response to the cathartic seems to be wholly specific. Indeed in most cases even the cathartics which seemingly have the most specific effects are given because of the systemic nature of the less evident process which accompanies or follows the more evident and specific catharsis. How much less the possibility of effecting a catharsis limited to specific elements of the psychic complex when the whole man feels profoundly stirred.

It ought not to be necessary to call attention to the fact that what we feel especially purged and what is especially purged are far from necessarily the same. As regards the tragic drama some feel that pity and fear, since they are so strongly affected, are the emotions purged, while others maintain that it is the emotions leading to the tragic error which the spectator actually feels have been purged by the tragedy. It should be clear to both classes if they apply the medical analogy that a catharsis is systemic, not narrowly specific, and that it is at least possible that the higher function of the whole process may be something other than the mere catharsis of certain emotions on which a feeling of cathartic effect may become evident to the introspective consciousness.

Perhaps, however, the nature and the extent of the entire process to which as a whole the term catharsis ought of right to be applied can be more readily seen, and the function in it of suspense as well, if we consider three phases of it as corresponding in the main to (1) the entanglement, (2) the disentanglement, and (3) the denouement. It is not intended to suggest that any one of these phases of the catharsis is confined to one particular portion of the play, but rather that while all may exist in the play throughout they are each more distinctly characteristic of certain parts.

We have already seen that the business of the entanglement is to effect a psychocrasis. The phase of the catharsis most evident in the entanglement is therefore the purging away of whatever is so merely individualistic in any one of the phases of the psychos that it can not enter harmoniously into this psychocrasis. We have seen, too, that the intellect and the will are not less the subjects of this purgation than the emotions.

In like manner we have seen that the chief function of the disentanglement is to unify the spectator with the tragic problem. This function has been begun in the entanglement, and is not completed until in the denouement; but it is none the less the special function of the disentanglement. The catharsis of this period will therefore be the purging from the already once purged psychos of whatever would prevent its fullest unification with the tragic problem. This does not assert that the catharsis which characterized the entanglement may not still be going on in an effort for a more perfect psychocrasis. Even granting, however, that this more distinctly individual psychocrasis is complete, the function of the disentanglement is so to purge it of its finite individuality and whatever is nar-

rowing in its merely personal nature that there can be brought into the unification not only those phases of the psychos unified through suspense in the entanglement but also the outer world as revealed in the problem of the tragedy.

At first thought this second purgation is not so evident as the former. But if in Macbeth one compares the finitely individual view the spectator has in the ghost scene with the broader outlook he has attained even by the time of the last witch scene he will see that a purgation essentially different from that of the entanglement is taking place. In the ghost scene (the beginning of the disentanglement) he sees a man being overtaken by his crimes, in the last witch scene (half way through the disentanglement) he sees a man, the type of all men, in the toils of fate. The problem is assuming a universal aspect. The spectator is in process of becoming the universal man.

But even at the best both the psychocrasis and the tragic problem are still essentially finite throughout the disentanglement to the final revelation which marks the denouement, for the specific problem still demands a specific solution. When at length, however, the specific problem is solved, and the spectator is thus released from the necessity of seeking a finite solution, it becomes possible in the catharsis of the denouement to purge from that psychocrasis the last trace of the finite, and thus to allow it as a universal to unite with the universal which the tragedy now unreservedly reveals.

In all this functioning of the catharsis, moreover, suspense has in the main depended for its effectiveness upon those five fundamentals which are evident alike in ourselves and the lower animals, and which in all probability were essential to its efficiency as a factor

in evolution in the prehuman organism. Indeed, so far as the catharsis is concerned, from the beginning of suspense in the introduction to the cessation of suspense in the denouement, we need scarcely consider any but these five: physical tension, alertness, alternation, accumulation of reserve energy, and the unification of the organism. Yet we can readily see that these five are distinctly functioning characteristics, for most of them evidently have a definite function from introduction to denouement.

This is probably evident as regards alertness and unification. For both are necessary to the readier solution of the problem, and the latter is necessary to the validity of that solution both in its special and in its more and more universal aspect. We shall see that it is true of alternation, of the accumulation of reserve energy, and even of physical tension.

As regards alternation, for instance, it is in the first place an essential factor, if not indeed the essential factor, in the accumulation of reserve energy. The possibility of many solutions, the uncertainty as to what Macbeth will do, the doubt as to Banquo's attitude, the growing menace of Macduff, these and a host of other elements of the problem are alternately thrust on the consciousness and force it to respond now this way now that. With every new phase of the problem thrust upon the consciousness of the spectator, moreover, there is the call from the growing psychocrasis for more energy, the demand for more energy to be ready to meet the new complexity.

This alternation is also needed in the entanglement to achieve and in the disentanglement to maintain the psychocrasis. Of the five characteristics of suspense which we have mentioned it is the one which has continually dynamic manifestation. It is the life of sus-

pense. When alternation ceases, when suspense becomes mere waiting, suspense is deadening. When complexities are so piled up or when destruction is so imminent that the consciousness is overwhelmed, alternation as an outward acting dynamic element ceases to exist. When a promised solution is offered, alternation ceases as confidence in it as the proper solution begins to be well established; but if at this point the solution is shown to be impossible the element of sheer thwartedness enters. In either of these cases suspense becomes not merely deadening but destructive. Alternation, however, keeps the organism dynamic in its own right; and it is in addition the necessary method by which the alertness induced by suspense attains effectiveness.

As regards the accumulation of reserve energy, its chief function in the entanglement is to deprive the merely individualistic elements in the psychos of the energy necessary to their continuous existence, and to strengthen the growing psychocrasis by putting more and more energy at its disposal. In the disentanglement it adds to this latter function by making possible its own lavish expenditure in perfecting the unification of the spectator with each new partial revelation of the problem. An added service is found, moreover, in the denouement where first the physical tension is seen to have unmistakably a definite and special bearing on the catharsis.

In the entanglement this physical tension very probably on the one hand finds a vent for those lower energies which are so merely physical that they could not enter into the psychocrasis, and on the other hand gives to it a more conscious feeling of assuredness by supplying a sense of physical backing. In the disentanglement it still more probably protects the unified

psychos from the advent of lower phases into consciousness even if by nothing more than by lessening the spectator's susceptibility to things other than the matter in hand. In the denouement, however, when the suspense ceases it is undoubtedly this physical tension on the one hand and the accumulation of reserve energy on the other that have so exhausted the spontaneous energy of the spectator that the psychocrasis is rendered passive to receive the supreme impress of the tragedy.

Considering the drama as made up of entanglement, disentanglement, and denouement we may therefore state the general function of suspense in the catharsis somewhat as follows.

In the entanglement suspense forces the emotions and intellect and will into so perfect a psychocrasis that those elements which can not enter such a union are purged away. In the disentanglement, whatever is merely individual even in this psychocrasis is purged away as the problem becomes more and more universal in its nature, and in the denouement the spectator, purged for the time being of all that is merely individualistic, becomes for the moment universal man in the presence of the universal which the tragedy reveals.



## PART III.

### THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE CATHARSIS.

The nature and scope of this catharsis which the suspense of tragedy makes possible is made still more evident by establishing the grounds upon which all claims to permanent effects of the catharsis must rest. It is true that soon after the period of highest effectiveness in the denouement the different phases of the psychos reassert themselves as such, since the finite problem which brought about the psychocrasis has been solved. The intellect returns to its differentiated aspect, sensation becomes again mere sensation receiving its interpretation more or less explicit from an explicit central consciousness, and the will reasserts itself and resumes its sway over the volitional acts of body and mind. And yet while all these phases were perfectly unified they as a whole received a deeper and truer impress of the universal than would have been otherwise possible. We may well feel, therefore, that even after differentiation takes place the effects of this deeper impress must in some way remain with all the phases which were included in the psychocrasis.

To be sure, as soon as the psychos has returned to its differentiated phases the intellect sets in to interpret, and because of its narrowness as only one phase of the psychos it has not the validity of the unified whole. Moreover, because it is acting merely as one phase of the psychos, the intellect has lost the universal character which the psychocrasis possessed under the influ-

ence of the universal in the tragedy, and the individual peculiarities of each spectator's methods of thought reassert themselves. As a result, the intellect may somewhat misinterpret, may even utterly warp what was revealed. Ask a man who has evidently been powerfully impressed by Macbeth what the play means and, when he forces his intellect to interpret, the answer will be partial, is apt to be shallow, and is generally confined to ambition.

And the will, especially in its more narrowly moral aspects, as it regains its sway and finds it necessary to harmonize definitely the import of the tragedy with its basis of action in ordinary life may do equal violence to the real impress the psychocrasis received. Thus it may force us to seek a moral even from the plays of Shakespeare. In Othello, for instance, it may narrow us down and warp us into laying stress upon the self-evident platitude that a man must not give way to jealousy. But in spite of these narrow interpretations the fact remains that while the psychocrasis was still complete and exalted to the plane of universal man, it did as a perfectly unified whole receive the direct impress of the universal underlying the tragedy.

Fortunately, moreover, it is not necessary in insisting on the validity of the impress of a great tragedy to insist on the validity of any narrow interpretation of that impress. Indeed in view of the insistence that the catharsis is fundamental rather than special and of the whole rather than of any differentiated phase it is not needful to attempt to establish an unvarying specific effect upon one special phase such as emotions or intellect or will. At best, moreover, such attempts will from the very narrowness of their purposes warp our conception of the real character of the permanent

effects of the catharsis, if indeed any such effects are permanent.

Instead of attempting to localize the after effects of the catharsis, the more fundamental basis for whatever permanent after effects may take place should be laid deep enough so that it may legitimately influence all the phases of the psychos. To say that by repeated purgation certain phases of the psychos get a tendency to stay purged, fails in not being sufficiently fundamental. It fails to take into consideration the subconscious basis of all the phases of our nature, that which underlies all the phases of consciousness and which enables man as an individual not only to react toward the outside world but to make it a part of himself.

In order to insist upon this point of view all we need to do is to recognize frankly some evident facts which result from biological evolution. We know that the specific emotions and intellect and will evolved from something more basic, more fundamental, in the organism than any specific form of its expression could possibly be. We know, moreover, even without enquiring especially into its nature, that whatever its specific character may or may not be this something more fundamental is what makes the individual an individual, is what so unifies organically all his various powers and activities as to make it possible for a man to recognize himself as an individual. It is that unity or unifying power which from the beginning of the evolutionary process has enforced into at least a working harmony with itself all the elements which have entered into the evolving organism. In harmony with this function this enforming unity, or subconscious basis of individuality or whatever we call it, transforms into a working harmony with itself the life experience of the individual.

The emotions and intellect and will are not, then, clear cut divisions of the psychos but merely phases of it, though differentiated in response to the needs of the evolving organism until in their extreme aspects they may seem even hostile to each other. The possibility of their harmony is always to be found, moreover, in this enforming unity; for if it is to exercise such a unifying power over the different phases of the psychic complex as to enform them into an essentially individual psychos it must necessarily enform their most fundamental elements.

In all probability, therefore, upon changes in this enforming unity depend all changes of an essentially fundamental character in the differentiated phases of the psychos which rise above yet for their validity depend upon this subconscious unity which enforms them all. If, then, the catharsis or if the tragedy is to have an after effect different in kind or even essentially in degree from other experiences of the individual, the tragedy must affect this subconscious unity in a correspondingly different way or in a different degree.

In its function of assimilating new experiences this enforming unity is called by psychologists the apperceptive mass and is after all the basis upon which all our experiences receive their interpretation, even though in the majority of cases it is not evident that anything more than one of the mere phases of the psychos is involved. Each successive experience has its effect on the apperceptive mass (or, as some psychologists would say, becomes a part of it) and helps to interpret succeeding experiences. The interpretation of any ordinary experience, however, is in no sense at the hands of all the phases of the psychos but rather, as indeed the law of economy would demand, a merely practical interpretation for the evident needs of the moment.

This is the validity of an ordinary experience, and its effect on this enforming unity is merely the effect of something which comes in distinctly as a subordinate thing. It comes in, moreover, more or less through one of the mere phases of the mind; and its appeal can therefore scarcely be said to be directly to the enforming unity but only in a mediate fashion as, for example, through explicit sensation and explicit mental interpretation.

Art, however, can properly be said to have a more direct contact with this enforming unity. Entering not through explicit sensation as such but rather through the sensuous emotions, it is not subjected to the narrowing interpretation of only one phase of the psychos; but the psychos as a whole feels it and its impress on the enforming unity is so much the more direct. In tragedy, moreover, certain specific conditions make possible the greatest known freedom of impress upon this enforming unity.

It is evident, in the first place, that the fact that the problem and the spectator are specially prepared for each other would give what takes place under such conditions a deeper impress than ordinary experiences. It would, moreover, have a deeper validity from the fact that through suspense all the phases possible have been drawn into the psychocrasis and that even the mere cognitive side of the experience is not through the medium of any one phase but through the reunified whole. Then too, through the insistent demands of suspense there is drawn into the psychocrasis all that is fundamental in the spectator and all that is most intimately concerned with his welfare. Accordingly, the enforming unity, which could not rise into consciousness as any one of the specific phases of the psychos, rises here in the reunified whole and gives it

added validity. Thus it is made possible for the universal in the tragedy to make a direct impress on this enforming unity.

It is here if at all that we must find our deeper basis for the enduring effects of the catharsis and of the tragedy. The tragic drama through the insistent calls of suspense draws into the psychocrasis not only evident special phases such as emotions and intellect and will but all that is vital in every differentiated phase of his psychos and the enforming unity of them all. Thus, when the special problem has been solved which through the tragic drama has brought about the psychocrasis, the enforming unity as a vital part of the unified whole receives the impress of the universal underlying the tragedy. Even when it sinks back into its ordinary subconscious state, therefore, it will in some measure be influenced by this direct impress.

The chief claim of art to a permanent effect differing essentially from that of ordinary experience is thus seen to be based upon the fact that through art there enter into this enforming unity elements essentially different from the elements that enter in any other way. For the elements that enter through ordinary experience are so transformed by the phase of the psychos through which they enter as to make them in harmony with that phase and with the merely individual needs of the moment. Elements that enter through art do so through less narrowly interpretative channels, retaining therefore more of their universal character. When as in tragedy, moreover, the psychocrasis is complete and thrice purified to receive it, the universal underlying the tragedy enters in its own right and fulness; and though the different phases afterwards reassert themselves nevertheless there remains in this enforming unity an element which entered not

through the narrowing channels through which ordinary experiences must pass, being thus transformed until they are in harmony with that which transforms them, but which entered free and in its fulness.

It is true that because of the variety and extent of experience interpretations which this enforming unity represents it is extremely doubtful whether the many successive universal elements which may enter through art will be able in course of time to transform it and thus purify the differentiated phases of one's nature, unless indeed they serve merely to turn the balance in favor of a transformation tendency well advanced from other causes. But, on the other hand, that such universal elements should have no permanent influence at all is inconceivable unless some undiscovered reason be found. Whether or not, however, this added influence be sufficient to affect this enforming unity so as radically to influence the pronouncements of specific phases of man's mind, still the tragic catharsis has performed its deeper mission in making possible the entrance to this enforming unity of the impress of untrammelled and unwarped universal elements.

The temporary purification, which we have seen the tragedy effects, lingers even in consciousness for some time after the psychocrasis begins to differentiate into the different phases which united to form it, and doubtless lingers subconsciously for some time after the spectator has fully regained his normal state. This would doubtless through frequent repetition form a basis of cell habit for permanent cathartic effects; but if any such permanent effects are brought about even on thus prepared phases of the psychos it will be through the unity underlying and enforming them all.

Even the immediate cathartic effect, however, requires some such fundamental explanation. It is not

enough for one to say "this is how I feel after hearing a great drama, therefore the catharsis consists of that which I see in its results on myself." A very little careful inquiry will show anyone that the conscious cathartic effect not only is often somewhat different in different people but sometimes varies widely. Yet any adequate explanation of the catharsis must be one which can find legitimate place for the effect of every great tragedy upon every worthy spectator.

Two possible reasons at once suggest themselves as to why these conscious effects vary so. One is that the reactions which take place as they listen to the play are different in different spectators. The other explanation would hold that the differences arise after the actual experience when each spectator comes to interpret the experience which he has passed through. For this interpretation will be influenced in the ordinary observer by his general attitude to life, in the critic by his critical preconceptions, in the philosopher by his world theory.

These two explanations, however, are not really as much at variance with each other as they may at first seem. Take an extreme case. Say that Hegel and Schopenhauer heard Hamlet under such conditions that the tragedy had its perfect art effect on each. In proportion as this effectiveness was attained each became at one with the universal revealed in the tragedy. In proportion as each did so he lost for the time being his distinctive beliefs, his peculiar attitude to life, his particular individuality. These were purged from the consciousness of each as he became wholly at one with the universal revealed in the tragedy, and impossible as such a thing would have been in ordinary life, and incredible as it at first seems even in the realm of art,



Schopenhauer and Hegel were therefore at one with each other.

Those who hold to the first explanation will say that each spectator in his normal state is at variance with the universal revealed in the tragedy; but that Hegel is at variance in some respects and Schopenhauer in others. Therefore the reaction which takes place as they listen to Hamlet must be different before they can be wholly at one with the work of art. This will be equally true of all spectators and when each comes to interpret the effect which the tragedy has had on him what would be more natural than that he should feel a consciousness of purgation on the one hand in those emotions which have been especially aroused or on the other hand in those phases of his consciousness which were so prominent that they had to be purged away before he could be at one with the universal revealed in the tragedy.

In dealing with this phase of the problem we need to keep steadily in mind the fact that, to use Huxley's phrase, one fact goes slick through a thousand theories. The great flaw in most that has been written upon the subject of the catharsis is this tendency of each writer to disregard the facts outside his own particular theory. Some people, for instance, will insist that every spectator of Macbeth feels his ambition purged. This sounds plausible enough, but any considerable amount of thoroughly honest and fairly intelligent investigation will prove to any one that it simply is not a fact. The theorist may say, if he wishes to be dogmatic, that every spectator is purged as to his ambition whether he feels it or not; but a theorizer must not say that every worthy spectator must feel purged as to any special emotion in any special play. When he questions any considerable number of persons of different

temperaments, different in education, and with different views of life, he will almost invariably find that even in his chosen play the facts will not uphold him. Most encouraging of all for the future of this problem, he will generally find that it is among the higher types of the audience that he finds the testimony that completely invalidates his theory.

He must therefore come to the conclusion that as far as conscious effects are concerned, the catharsis varies. When the investigator has reached this point there is hope. For if he is to find a valid explanation of the catharsis he ought to realize that it must be such a one as will furnish at least a legitimate explanation of all the conscious effects which take place.

Such an explanation would at first thought seem more easily furnished by the theory which holds that the differences in conscious effects arise after hearing the play when each spectator interprets the experience he has passed through, each in his own way. This theory, however, merely lays the stress on the other part of the whole experience. We may say that there is a reaction of the play on the spectator during its performance and a reaction of the spectator on the experience he has passed through; but they are really both a part of the same experience, for the reaction of the play does not stop as long as it remains in the consciousness. Depending in part on temperament, however, but in part also on previous attitude to life and on other things as well, the attitude of one spectator will be determined for the most part by the reaction which takes place while the play is in progress, while that of another will be rather the more or less explicit interpretation which he makes of it after the dramatic performance is over.

Among this latter class we find especially those who

go to see the tragedy with a pretty definite theory as to how they ought to feel after it is over. Of course the testimony of such persons can not be taken at face value as to the real cathartic effects of the tragedy. Another class to whose opinions too much importance is likely to be assigned are those who like Hegel and Schopenhauer have world theories to support and who will therefore necessarily interpret the drama not in its own right but as subordinate to their theories. In such cases it may perhaps be legitimate for the student of the catharsis to disregard the testimony of any persons where he can show that their testimony is biased and is not a genuine report of the actual effect of the drama. But even here he must exclude only so much of the testimony as is clearly forced interpretation. It is just as incumbent on his theory to account for the actual effects on a philosopher or a critic as for the effects on a business man or an artist.

We gain a conception of the catharsis sufficiently fundamental to explain these varied effects only when we conceive of it as essentially systemic rather than specific. More readily than in any other way, moreover, we may see by considering the function of suspense in the process how essentially systemic the catharsis in the drama is. In fact it is through the means by which suspense is aroused and the manner in which suspense is ended that the catharsis of tragedy is so distinctly more important than the catharsis which takes place under the influence of other arts. Indeed in criticism the term is for the most part used only with reference to the tragic drama and many are unaware that the term can with propriety be used with reference to any other form of art.

Of course this is a mistake. Aristotle himself used the term first with reference to music and, as we have

already pointed out, the way in which any work of art attains a higher validity than ordinary experience is due to a process essentially cathartic in its nature. For before one can become so in harmony with the universal revealed in any work of art that he can in any real sense be said to have received the impress of its universal, unwarped and not narrowed by his merely individualistic reaction, there must in some way have been purged from his psychic complex those elements which make for individualistic reaction in ordinary experiences.

This catharsis in the sense in which it is common to art as a whole need not be complete, however, in order for us on this ground to justify as art the work which caused it. It need only be sufficient for us to feel that the art impress is in some way essentially different from that of ordinary experience. Thus in most genre painting three out of five ordinary spectators will feel a distinctly individualistic reaction, and the same will be found true of many comedies and most novels. In the higher art, however, at least this consciousness of reaction as a distinct individual must be purged away and one must feel that he is not only in the presence of but a part of the universal.

How fully are the emotions and intellect and will drawn into the psychocrasis so that they may thus receive the direct impress of the universal underlying the work of art? While not the only question to be taken into consideration this it would seem is certainly the chief one to ask when endeavoring to ascertain which ones of the different arts have the fuller and higher and deeper impress. It is, moreover, with especial reference to this question that the function of suspense in the catharsis of tragedy becomes most evident.

Though an element essentially akin to suspense en-

ters into the static arts,<sup>11</sup> especially architecture, it has here no such compelling power as suspense possesses in the arts which are essentially dynamic in character. Whatever of the phases of his nature may be drawn into the psychocrasis of the spectator of these static arts there is yet lacking the biologically compelling power of suspense to draw into it elements which would not otherwise enter or which do not enter with sufficient fullness to make the psychocrasis the most inclusive possible.

What amounts to very much the same thing is true of all the dynamic arts except tragedy. Suspense enters very largely into most of them but in none except tragedy does it enter in such fashion as to stir the spectator to the utmost depths and compel all that is most vital to unite in the presence of the universal and receive its unhindered impress. We need not take up the other dynamic arts one by one, we need only see why suspense becomes more effective during the progress of the tragedy than in any other art and why the total effectiveness is greater in the end. We need, in other words, to see first why suspense in a great tragedy must be of a more compelling nature than in any other art so that it reaches down to the very depths of the spectator's nature and brings all that is most vital into the psychocrasis. In addition to this we need to see what difference there is between tragedy and the other arts in the final use made of suspense and the results attained through it.

We find in the very nature of the tragedy itself both these things we need to realize. In tragedy suspense reaches deeper down than in any other art and calls with a more compelling power upon all that is most

<sup>11</sup> Painting, sculpture, and architecture.

vital in the spectator simply because it is tragedy. In all art with other than a tragic ending, if it is good art there must throughout be at least a subconscious feeling of assuredness that all will yet be well with the hero. Even when complications are thickening fast in the schauspiel, or reconciling drama, when the spectator can see no possible grounds of hope for the hero, still if the art be true art there must be from the beginning the preparation for the schauspiel rather than the tragic end. Moreover because this end is prepared for in the schauspiel, and still more evidently in the comedy, there must be in the soul of the spectator, whether he is conscious of it or not, a feeling of assuredness that all will yet end well. Under such conditions it can scarcely be conceived otherwise than that in the presence of this at least partial assuredness no call of suspense nor anything else can bring unreservedly into the unification all the elements most vitally concerned with the well-being of an individual whose well-being is already at least partially assured.

In the tragedy, however, the tragic end must likewise be foreshadowed. There is in the spectator no lurking feeling of security and, with the tragic necessity overshadowing it all, when the insistent demands of suspense call for more and more energy to meet the tragic problem all that is most vital in every phase of the psychos must respond. Thus in a tragedy there is drawn into the unification in fuller and completer fashion more of the vital elements of the spectator than is possible where greater or less grounds of security make the call of suspense of necessity less compelling.

In the denouement of the tragedy, moreover, this psychocrasis is brought more directly in contact with the universal than is possible in other than a tragic end. In all other possible endings even the final im-

press of the universal is in mediate fashion, in the tragic ending only does it become direct. In the schauspiel, for instance, no matter how you glorify your hero he is still an individual and whatever of the universal you see, you see it mediately through him. In the tragedy, however, the whole fabric, so to speak, is torn asunder and we meet the universal face to face. The hero is an individual; the individual as such must perish before the larger universal of which he was but a part can be directly revealed.

We are now in a position to see what the catharsis as a systemic process really is in its entirety. It is the purging of all the most vital elements in the spectator in such fashion as to make it possible for him as a completely unified being to receive the impress of the universal which the tragedy reveals. It is the purging away of every element which would hinder the psychocrisis or keep it on so low a plane of the merely individual that the universal could not make itself felt as such. This is the catharsis in its entirety as it is found in the great tragedy.

In some other arts, however, notably in music and in the schauspiel the cathartic process is so marked that the term may very properly be applied. Whether it should be applied to still other arts also, to painting and sculpture and architecture, for instance, is not however a question of degree only but of diction, for the connotation of the word catharsis implies more of a compelling character than the free, uncompelled surrendering up of one's self which characterises so many spectators of these static arts. What we need to note here is that wherever it is found in art the catharsis is systemic, with no clearly defined limits to its action even where it may at first thought seem specific and limited. It is the compelling nature of the catharsis

of the tragic drama that most evidently distinguishes it from the catharsis which takes place through the other arts.

Elsewhere than in tragedy the catharsis is systemic but partial; in the tragedy, systemic and complete. In music, for instance, the cathartic influence extends to the intellect for the most part only by indirection, in the tragedy the call upon the intellect is direct and compelling. In short the distinction between the catharsis effected by the tragedy and that attained through other arts is that in the tragedy only are emotions and intellect and will alike literally forced to join wholly and unreservedly in the unification, the catharsis consisting in the purging away from every one of these uniting phases their merely individualistic elements in such fashion that the resulting psychocrasis is not individualistic but universal in its essential character.

To illustrate from another view point, just as the artist in the treatment of his material must exclude all elements of the outer world which would prevent the universal being revealed in the work of art, so it is the business of the catharsis to exclude all elements in the inner world which would keep the universal so revealed from being apprehended in its fullness. Anyone will readily understand that the idiosyncrasies which make men republicans or democrats, optimists or pessimists, presbyterians or methodists or what not, are not only not of a character to make them effective in the apprehension of a universal presented through art but are of such a narrowly individualistic nature as to be actually inimical to any such apprehension. Such activities of the mind must therefore be purged away whether they are essentially emotional, intellectual, or volitional in character.



Nor is it at all an impossible thing for elements of a living whole to be purged away and yet to reappear. As every phase of activity depends for its very existence upon the energy which gives it life, all that is necessary in order to purge away any such element of the psychos is to deprive it of the energy by which alone its existence could interfere with the more universal elements. Nor is this catharsis as it occurs in the tragic drama a merely negative process as is almost universally assumed. The energy is in no sense lost but rather becomes more effective. On the negative side it is true that the merely individualistic elements are purged away by being deprived of the energy which is necessary to their continuous existence. The positive side of the process, however, is equally true and quite as important. The demands for this energy are made in behalf of the more universal elements and those that are individualistic are purged away through yielding up their energy to the universal. Thus the universal is not only strengthened but made all-inclusive by the self-surrender of the merely individual.

It is because the catharsis of tragedy is so systemic and complete that a basis has been found for so many theories as to what it is, since by laying sufficient stress on certain things it has been found easy to disregard everything else in the process. Some are led temperamentally to exalt certain things and disregard others, some are led to do so because of their past experiences, some through their race, perhaps, and certainly many through having preconceptions as to what to look for. Thus at the end of the same tragedy one will feel purged of his self-sufficiency, one strengthened to endure the buffets of fate, one in harmony and at confidence with his universe. Upon the man who has had bitter experiences the tragedy will almost cer-

tainly have a different reaction than upon one who has lived in peace and contentment, and though we can not assert it of each individual in the race it would be strange indeed if the reaction upon the Frenchman and the German were entirely the same. This racial difference, rather than any other, is probably at the basis of the disagreement between Corneille and Lessing. The temperamental difference explains most naturally the difference between Corneille and Voltaire, while traces of his preconceptions are fairly evident in the reaction of the tragedy upon almost every spectator who has studied the drama or who has decided views on life.

No wonder then that there have been so many definitions of catharsis. If the rank and file of theatergoers had each taken the trouble to tell us what each thought the catharsis to be there would doubtless have been infinitely more. The simple and evident fact is that as the catharsis of the tragedy takes place in each individual spectator as it finds him, even in a process which is essentially systemic in its nature the specific reactions which must take place before he can become in perfect harmony with the universal revealed in the drama must necessarily differ somewhat with different spectators. When this difference is sufficient to make an impress on the after consciousness of the spectator as he looks back on the effect of the tragedy we have the basis of disagreement as to what constitutes the catharsis. We have here, too, a proof which alone, even if we had no other, ought to convince us that the catharsis is not specific but systemic.

In the light of such considerations the function of suspense in the catharsis becomes all the more evident. The more fundamental our conception of the catharsis the more we recognize in suspense the compelling

power that forces all that is most vital in us to enter the psychocrasis and, through striving to enter into a psychocrasis which is becoming more and more universal, to purge itself of whatever in its nature is so merely individual as to hinder its doing so. Suspense not only achieves but maintains this psychocrasis so that by contact with the universal, which as the drama progresses becomes more and more evident, it too may become more and more universal in its character. In short, throughout the tragedy, by its insistent and varied demands upon every phase of our being suspense monopolizes for the psychocrasis not only all the energy that the energy producing cells of every phase of our nature furnish of their own accord, but all they can be made to produce.

As a result, all that is merely individual in the spectator is purged away by being deprived of the energy necessary to its continuous existence. Moreover, because the demands of suspense upon the energy producing cells have been so insistent and varied, these cells have been exhausted by the production of the required energy and as soon as the suspense stimulus is withdrawn they therefore lapse temporarily into inactivity. And here, finally, the supreme function of suspense in the catharsis becomes evident, since it is through its functioning that it becomes possible for the psychocrasis as a completely passive and perfect whole to receive the direct impress of the universal which the tragedy reveals.







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